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Spy-and-tell authors damaging CIA efforts, Turner asserts

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NEWPORT — CIA Director Stansfield Turner yesterday said that the recent spate of revelatory books by former agents has "severely" damaged U.S. intelligence-gathering efforts abroad.

Prosecuting ex-spies-turned-authors such as Frank Snepp is a necessary step towards restoring confidence in the ability of the CIA to protect its secrets and the agents and foreign operatives who gather them, Turner said.

His remarks came at an afternoon press conference after the Naval Education and Training Center's change-of-command ceremonies at which Turner, a former president of the Naval War College, was the featured speaker.

Turner said that "people who have been associated with us overseas have severed their associations" as a result of books like "Decent Interval," Snepp's account of the fall of Saigon. "The degree of the damage may not be fully apparent for five or 10 years."

Snepp was on trial in federal court in Virginia this week for breaking a contractual agreement with the agency not to publish anything on CIA operations without its permission. The judge in the two-day, non-jury trial is expected to announce the verdict today.

Snepp has defended his motives in writing the book by saying it was necessary for the CIA to "learn from its mistakes."

Turner yesterday said that although he is "anxious for the CIA to investigate its mistakes," Snepp's book does more to



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hinder that goal than help. He expressed doubt about the purity of Snepp's motives, pointing to "the way Snepp handled the book and publicized it as unauthorized" by the agency.

He said he asked the Justice Department to prosecute Snepp because the CIA will lose respect if "an individual is allowed to flaunt its secrets."

Turner praised the creation of Congressional committees to oversee the propriety of U.S. spying activities as a strengthening influence on the CIA. The controls will keep the operations more open,

lessen the possibility of scandal and improve the agency's image with the public, Turner said.

He said he has confidence in the committees' ability to keep secret the information that the CIA gives them in confidence.

The committees are the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which was formed in 1976, the year-old House Permanent Subcommittee on Intelligence, and the White House Intelligence Oversight Board, which was created by the Ford administration.

Besides these, the CIA reports on its operations to six other congressional committees. The CIA hopes that Congress will limit the number of committees involved in CIA business to the three oversight bodies.

*Org 1 Naval War College
Change of Command*